

TEXT: Hebrews 13:8

TITLE: JESUS CHRIST – THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY AND FOREVER

**BIG IDEA:**

**BECAUSE JESUS NEVER CHANGES, WE FACE THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Instability** in the world is all around us. As we enter a new year, we face uncertainty about the ramifications of the change in leadership in North Korea – a regime that is developing nuclear weapon capability. We face uncertainty about what our country’s leadership will look like after the next presidential elections. We face uncertainty about the world’s economic crisis. We face uncertainty about how to pay for rising costs in healthcare and energy.

Our New Year’s message for today brings us a word of confidence and assurance. It is taken from one of the shortest verses in Scripture: **Hebrews 13:8** -- “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*” Theologians title this topic: **the Immutability of God** – because they like to use long, complicated sounding terminology. You know what a mutation is = some type of change. When it comes to the character of God, we have the assurance that God never mutates, He never changes.

**Wayne Grudem:** God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises . . .

Since God is perfect in His wisdom, His love, His mercy – you can never add anything to God and you can never take anything away from the person of God. He continues to be who He is from all eternity.

**Our circumstances** certainly change all of the time; Our health can change in an instant; our personal finances can be disrupted drastically; our friends can turn their backs on us; **God’s program** moves forward in terms of progressive revelation so that you have changing dispensations in how He relates to mankind and what God is accomplishing. But in His person, Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday and today and forever. That is why we can trust Him with such confidence and know that He is sufficient for all we need.

**BECAUSE JESUS NEVER CHANGES, WE FACE THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE**

**I. JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY – UNCHANGING IN HIS PERSON**

Here we want to start out with some testimonies. How have you found Jesus to be a rock in 2011? How has He proven Himself faithful to you and your family?

Amazing Grace lyrics:

*“Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;  
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.”*

What are some of the dangers, toils, and snares that His grace has safely taken you through so that you have confidence for today and for tomorrow? We will sing the song Amazing Grace while you compose your thoughts and come up with something you would like to share.

**Ps. 102:25-27** *“Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.”*

God is unchanging with respect to His person, His character, His attributes

Images of immutability and stability:

A. Jesus as our **Anchor** in the midst of any storm

- our hearts are prone to wander – set our hope completely on the promises of God about our salvation in Jesus Christ – **Heb. 6:19-20** *“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”* We need an emotional anchor

- in terms of doctrine and truth, we are easily blown around by counterfeit teachings and the philosophy of the world – **Ephes. 4:14** *“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming”* – We need a doctrinal anchor

B. Jesus as our **Rock**, our fortress, our high tower, our place of refuge and protection

**Herman Bavink** (Dutch theologian): The doctrine of God’s immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in him alone, for only he is pure being and no becoming. Hence, in Scripture God is often called the Rock . . .

Jesus is the Rock we can depend upon with confidence because His attributes never change – they remain the same. He continues steadfast in His love for His sheep. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. He is a rock in that sense. He continues steadfast in His goodness in His dealings with us – **James 1:17** *“Every good thing given and ever perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”* That is because God is a steadfast Rock.

C. Jesus as our **Sure Foundation**, which will never be shaken

**J. I. Packer**: Examine God’s two disclosures of His “name” in the book of Exodus. God’s revealed “name” is, of course, more than label; it is a revelation of what He is, in relation to men. In Exodus 3, we read how God announced His name to Moses as *“I am that I am”* (verse 14) – a phrase of which “Yahweh” (Jehovah, “the LORD”) is, in effect, a shortened form (verse 15). This “name” is not a description of God, but simply a declaration of His self-existence, and His eternal changelessness; a reminder to mankind that He has life in Himself, and that what He is now, He is eternally. In Exodus 34, however, we read how God *“proclaimed the name of the LORD”* to Moses by listing the various facets of His holy character. *“The LORD, the LORD (Yahweh), a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children . . .”* (verses 5 ff RSV). This proclamation supplements that of Exodus 3 by telling us what in fact

Yahweh is; and that of Exodus 3 supplements this by telling us that God is forever what at that moment, three thousand years ago, He told Moses that He was. God's moral character is changeless.

Jesus presented Himself to His disciples in the gospel of John in the "I AM" passages as:

1. "*I am the bread of life*" (**John 6**) – Word of Regeneration -- able to regenerate lost sinners; able to give spiritual life initially and then sustain it each day
2. "*I am the light of the world*" (**John 9:5**) – Word of Revelation – brings moral light into a world of sin and darkness
3. "*I am the door of the sheep*" (**John 10**) – Word of Refreshment – you go in for safety and sleep and go out for exercise and refreshment; the only way to God
4. "*I am the Good Shepherd*" (**John 10**) – Word of Responsibility – He assumes the role of pastor and cares for the needs of the flock
5. "*I am the resurrection and the life*" (**John 11:25**) – Word of Resurrection
6. "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*" (**John 14:6**) – Word of Requirement – Exclusivity of Jesus being the pathway to God; the all sufficient one
7. "*I am the True Vine*" (**John 15:1**) – Word of Reality – other vines will disappoint

## **II. JESUS CHRIST THE SAME TODAY – UNCHANGING IN HIS PURPOSES**

All of us face significant challenges today. Think of the exhortations Jesus issued to the disciples and how today He continues to call each of us to those same responsibilities

### **A. The Call to Discipleship: "*Deny yourself; take up your cross daily and Follow Me*" – Our Relationship to the Lord Jesus --**

- Involves a call to Wholehearted Commitment – "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind;* **Luke 10:27**
- Involves a call to Holiness – "*Be ye holy, for I am holy*" – (**1 Pet. 1:15-16**) - Obedience
- Involves a call to Humility – "*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus*" (**Phil. 2**) the path of a servant is the one Jesus trod

### **B. The Call to Evangelism: "*Follow Me and I will make you Fishers of Men*" – Our Relationship to the Lost --**

- must have compassion for the lost – you have to love to fish – book title: "I'm Glad You Asked"
- must go where the fish are – look at the effort fishermen put into scoping out a good spot
- must use attractive bait – sufficiency of the Word of God
- must be patient and persevere
- must trust God for the results – look at the disciples – fished all night and caught nothing; but when Jesus told them to cast their nets into the waters again, the nets

could not contain the catch; fields are white unto harvest

The message of the gospel has not changed – many false gospels out there ... but only one has the power to deliver from sin and from hell

C. The **Call to Security**: “*Fear not for I am with you*”

**Our Relationship to Self --**

Great Commission – Go and “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*”

Financial security, emotional, physical, etc.

**Is. 46:9-11** “*Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure; Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.*”

**Packer**: It is true that there is a group of texts (Gen. 6:6 f.; 1 Sam. 15:11; 2 Sam. 24:16; Jonah 3:10; Joel 2:13 f.) which speak of God as **repenting**. The reference in each case is to a reversal of God’s previous treatment of particular men, consequent upon their reaction to that treatment. But there is no suggestion that this reaction was not foreseen, or that it took God by surprise, and was not provided for in His eternal plan. No change in His eternal purpose is implied when He begins to deal with a man in a new way.

### **III. JESUS CHRIST THE SAME FOREVER – UNCHANGING IN HIS PROMISES**

We know who holds our future; so we can be confident as we face the unknown. It is unknown to us but not to our God.

God is unchanging with respect to His Promises:

A. Jesus, **the Bridegroom of the Church**, returning to enjoy the wedding feast with His beloved

1. Preparation of the Groom: **John 14:1-4** “*I go to prepare a place for you*”

2. Preparation of the Bride: **Rev. 19:7-10** “*Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.*”

Is the bride getting herself prepared? Are we alert and watching?

We had better not be found to be adulterers, to be unfaithful; “*Friendship with the world is enmity to God*”

B. Jesus, **the Faithful Judge** – the one who will reward each according to what he has sown; the one who sees all; the one to whom we are accountable

The Father has committed all judgment to the Son; we don’t have to agonize over trying to get a fair shake in this life – this life is not fair; but the Righteous Judge will settle all accounts

“*as a man sows, so shall he also reap*” = universal harvest principle

How should we live in light of the urgency of the Judge standing at the door, ready to enter His courtroom?

C. Jesus, **the Reigning King** – just as He fulfilled in every detail, the promises of His First Coming as the precious Lamb of God; we look forward to Him returning as the reigning King over all

*“God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him, the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. 2:9-11*

1. History Will Accomplish God’s Kingdom Purposes
2. There is Victory in Jesus

We will have the privilege of reigning with Him; sharing in His inheritance forever

Amazing Grace lyrics:

*“When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,  
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise Than when we first begun.”*

**CONCLUSION:**

God is unchanging in **His person**, in **His purposes**, and in **His promises**.

As we enter into the new year, 2012 – one thing that has changed for sure is how close we are to the return of Jesus Christ.

**Rom. 13:11-12** *“Do this [love your neighbor as yourself], knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”* Sense of urgency in 2012

**Rev. 22:12-16** *“Behold, I am coming quickly . . .”* Hopefully in 2012!

It is no secret what God can do.  
**What He's done for others, He'll do for you.**  
With arms wide open, He'll pardon you.  
It is no secret what God can do.

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Dr. J. R. Miller:** We leave many things behind us as we go on. We can never go back again over the closing year. We never go over any life-path a second time. We never pass a second time through any experience. We have infancy once, childhood once, youth once, manhood and womanhood once, old age once, and we die once. We are forever leaving things, places,

conditions, and experiences behind us. But through all these we have the same Christ, unchanged, unchanging.

The old ark was carried forward into the new land of promise, and still led the people. The Christ of childhood and of youth remains the Christ of manhood and of old age. Whatever changes the years bring to us, we must ever keep our eyes on the living Christ. He will always be all we need. There will never be a path which he cannot find for us and show us. There will never be a dark valley which he cannot light up for us. There will never be a battle which he cannot fight for us. There will never be an experience through which he cannot safely take us. We are leaving the old year behind, but we are not leaving Christ in the dead year. We need not be afraid, therefore, to go forward, if we go with him. We have not passed this new way heretofore, and it is all strange to our inexperience; but Christ knows and he will guide us, and all will be well if we put our hand in his.

**A. W. Tozer:** **Mal. 3:6** “*For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*”

Now there is in God no mutation possible. As it says in James, “*with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” (1:17) – there is no variation due to change . . . Incidentally, He’s the only One in the universe that can say that, And He did say it! He simply says that He never changes, that there is no change possible in God. God never differs from Himself. If you get a hold of this, it can be to you an anchor in the storm, a hiding place in danger. There is no possibility of changing in God. And God never differs from Himself.

**Grudem:** If we stop for a moment to imagine what it would be like if God *could* change, the importance of this doctrine becomes more clear. For example, if God could change (in his being, perfections, purposes, or promises), then any change would be either for the better or for the worse. But if God changed for the better, then he was not the best possible being when we first trusted him. And how could we be sure that he is the best possible being now? But if God could change for the worse (in his very *being*), then what kind of God might he become? . . . How could we ever trust such a God who could change? How could we ever commit our lives to him? Our faith and hope and knowledge all ultimately depend on a person who is infinitely worthy of trust – because he is absolutely and eternally unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises.

**J. I. Packer:** Where is the sense of distance and difference, then, between believers in Bible times and ourselves? It is excluded. On what grounds? On the grounds that God does not change. Fellowship with Him, trust in His word, living by faith, “standing on the promises of God”, are essentially the same realities for us today as they were for Old and New Testament believers. This thought brings comfort as we enter into the perplexities of each day: amid all the changes and uncertainties of life in a nuclear age, God and His Christ remain the same – almighty to save. But the thought brings a searching challenge too. If our God is the same as the God of New Testament believers, how can we justify ourselves in resting content with an experience of communion with Him, and a level of Christian conduct, that falls so far below theirs? *If God is the same, this is not an issue that any one of us can evade.*

**Howard Parnell:**

1. Health may fail us -- but His strength is made perfect in our weakness.
2. Adversity may crash upon us -- but He draws closer than a brother and whispers, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."



3. Friends may desert us, so that we end up saying with Paul, "No man stood with me." -- But we can also say with him in the next verse, "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me."

4. And even when death draws near He assures us, "I am the resurrection and the life."

E. I take great comfort in knowing that my Saviour is referred to in Isa. 9:6 as "the everlasting Father" and as One with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.

### Clark Tanner:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday. He is the eternal Word of God, Who from eternity past has been the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature. And again our hearts can rejoice when we think that from the ages of eternity past, He who exists at once from eternity to eternity, knew us intimately. He knew every sin we would ever commit; every foolish thought; every ungodly word we would speak. He looked down from the vast corridors of Heaven, before ever speaking even the light into existence, and could see clearly the blackness of our rebellion and the full depths of the chasm of our fall, and knowing all, determined to temporarily lay aside the independent exercise of His own divine attributes, take on the form of a servant, become obedient to the point of death (even death on a cross), and as we're told in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, was made to 'become sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him' . . .

Just as He did not change when he took on flesh, and did not change when He raised in glory from the dark tomb, and did not change when He blessed his apostles and was received by a cloud into Heaven to sit at the Father's right hand, so He will not be a different Jesus Christ, who comes on a white horse, to judge and wage war; His eyes a flame of fire and many diadems on His head, and clothed with a robe dipped in blood and on his thigh written, "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS"!

### Spurgeon: The Immutability of Christ -- Jan. 3, 1858

It is well there is one person who doesn't change; Think of the changes that have taken place in your life this past year and caused you grief; Think of changes on the world scene; the world is growing old; they shall perish; but blessed be Him who forever will be the same and for whose years there is no end;

#### I. Word of Explanation

A. The same in His Person – as loving, as approachable, as generous, as kind

B. The same in regard to His relationship to His Father – His well-beloved

C. The same to His people forever – has never failed us once;

D. The same to Sinners – Come and try Him!

E. The same in the Teachings of His Word – People say we need a different style of preaching than what was effective for Bunyan, etc.; the gospel is the same; "Hold fast the form of sound words"; preaching of Paul must be the preaching of today; we may advance in our knowledge of it; but it stands perfect; mongrel mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism is preached today; election and perseverance not mentioned

#### II. Answer Objections

Incredulity and Unbelief cries out: "How can that be true?"

Yesterday Christ was all sunshine to me; today He is causing me distress???

The sun is the same always even though we see clouds at times

We change; not God

The fact that you have troubles is a proof of His faithfulness

You will find that the flame has not hurt you; just consumed your dross

#### III. Application – If Christ be always the same . . .

- A. Don't set your affections on those things of this world that changes and soon will pass away;
- B. Endeavor to imitate Christ so that you will not change despite your outward circumstances
- C. Rejoice in your security